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**UGANDA**

## SUCCESS STORY

### Village Health Teams Help Curb Spread of Hepatitis E



USAID/OTI Uganda

Village health team members attend a training session in the sub-county of Paicho, Gulu District.

*The overall goal of USAID/Uganda's OTI program is to support the voluntary return of displaced northern Ugandans by increasing their confidence in the government and in the ongoing transition process. Toward this goal, OTI will focus on the following objectives:*

- 1. Enhance the capacity of the Ugandan media, particularly in northern Uganda, to research, inform, and report on issues relevant to peace, recovery, and development;*
- 2. Increase the visibility of, and confidence in, all levels of government through the delivery of targeted, strategic interventions; and*
- 3. Provide support to truth and reconciliation processes.*

**November 2008** – In early 2008, northern Uganda was hit by an outbreak of Hepatitis E, a waterborne viral hepatitis that is most commonly contracted by young adults between the ages of 15 and 40. The outbreak started in Kitgum District but quickly spread to the neighboring districts of Gulu, Amuru, and Adjumani.

Suspected cases of Hepatitis E were reported in the Gulu District sub-counties of Patiko and Paicho, two jurisdictions near the source of the outbreak in Kitgum. Local government officials knew they had to act quickly to fill the information gap about Hepatitis E, dispel rumors about the disease, and provide instruction on how to counter it.

To address the immediate epidemic, the Gulu District government, with support from USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), mounted a campaign to raise awareness about the disease and improve sanitation to control its spread. The campaign trained 200 village health team members in the two sub-counties to assist communities in tackling the outbreak. The health teams disseminated information and provided medical support to the sick.

The initiative also provided practical assistance to halt the spread of the disease. For example, households in the sub-counties were supplied with tools to construct pit latrines, as the virus is often transmitted through contaminated drinking water. In addition, local radio stations were enlisted to broadcast eight interactive programs focusing on prevention and containment of the disease.

The effort was timely, as a recently released report identified 61 cases of infection in Gulu, including two deaths. The campaign also provided an opportunity for the residents of Paicho and Patiko to see their government in action, responding quickly and effectively to a public health emergency.